

February 25, 2024

Second Sunday in Lent: "Becoming Truly Alive: From Escape to Transparency!"

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

300 E. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

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SEASON OF LENT

Stones come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Some are given great monetary value and some are very useful to sculpt statues or build structures that can stand a thousand years. However, most just lie there, often getting in the way. Yet God calls us to become "living stones!" What does this mean? How can this transformation happen? Who are these living stones in our midst and which ones, yet unearthed, will also spring to life?

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude (Stan)

Call to Worship (Based on Psalm 22:23-31)

Leader: You who take God seriously, sing praises! All you offspring of Menno here at FCMF, glorify God alone!

People: God does not despise nor turn away from the affliction of the afflicted; nor does God run away and hide when I cry out for help.

L: The poor shall eat and be satisfied and those who truly seek God their hearts shall be filled with praises forever!

P: To the ends of the earth, every kind of folk and in every nation true worship of God will be learned.

L: Every living thing in the earth will bow down in worship before God and will rise up fully alive to serve God.

ALL: Nothing that we do for the Lord is lost and because of our faithfulness, future generations will know the truth about God and will serve God.

"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own." — Michelle Obama

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." — Margaret Mead

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51:1-17)

Have mercy on me, O God, because your love is steady like a rock and your mercy is abundant! Please forget all the times I have failed to follow you, but instead scrub me from head to toe with soap and hot water to wash off those stains. I have a hard time letting go of my faults and you would be more than justified in punishing me harshly. But you, O God, desire what is true in me, what I hold deep within my heart. Purge me with a strong laxative and remove all my stains with a powerful bleach. Help create a heart that is true and fill me with your spirit. Restore my joy and sustain me when I'm weak. God, open my lips so I can sing your praises. I know that you take no delight in dead, ritual sacrifices, but that you are pleased when I open myself up to the brokenness of the world around me.

Congregational Singing

Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

All: Let us offer one another signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

2. HEARING GOD'S WORD

Scriptures: two versions of Matthew 4:1-5

Then the Spirit took Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3 The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple. (NRS version)

After being lead by the Spirit into rehab, Jesus was discharged after thirty days, since that's all Medicaid would pay for. And since he had nowhere to go, he ended up on a couch at a friend's house. But one of his old dealers found him there and said, "Wanna get high? I got some rocks and a needle right here, but they ain't gonna do themselves!"

He answered, "Nope! I'm different now. I used to do drugs to escape from my bad feelings, but that ain't life. Life means being transparent and I don't wanna needle or drugs to ever run my life again!"

So the dealer left to figure out a different strategy. (Ramer, Bostrom version)



SERMON: "Becoming Truly Alive: From Escape to Transparency!"

The "Living Stones" that God needs to build true spiritual homes are us. People are what make a church; we are the bricks and mortar; we are stones that have come alive! We have witnessed firsthand some huge transformations in the lives of many in our midst.

How did this happen? Many of these "living stones" went unnoticed, while others obstinately kept getting in the way, and most were downright ornery in their refusal to budge even a little bit. The real building blocks of our church are those folks who are often overlooked, difficult to move, and hardened by a culture that despises them.

3. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Congregational Singing

Response

Joys and Concerns

Offering & Music

Sending (based on Matthew 6:11-6, 16-21)

"You just need to be a flea against injustice. Enough committed fleas biting strategically can make even the biggest dog uncomfortable and transform even the biggest nation." — Marian Wright Edelman